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Senate

The 20th day of January being the day prescribed by House Joint Resolution 80 for the meeting of the 2d session of the 108th Congress, the Senate assembled in its Chamber at the Capitol at 12 noon.

The Senate was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty and Everlasting God, You are the meaning and mystery of all that is, was, and is to be. Thank You for Your constant love and for the opportunities to learn from each other. Thank You also for challenges and difficulties that test and refine us.

Lord, help us to make respect for You our first priority, and give our leaders the wisdom to trust the unfolding of Your will. May we embrace a humility that seeks first to understand instead of striving to be understood. Deliver us from a false patriotism that would render unto Caesar what belongs to You. Guide us with Your powerful hand until the kings of this world acknowledge Your sovereignty and might.

We pray this in Your Holy Name.
Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, first of all, I should welcome everybody back

because this is the formal convening of the second session of the 108th Congress. As everyone knows, we have a fairly short legislative session this year. I know in our leadership meeting this morning, and I am sure in the Democrats' leadership meeting this morning, we both began to outline the agenda for the year. When you look at the calendar and you look at the amount that we will be addressing, it is going to be challenging. We all recognize the challenge that is before us. Everybody is returning rested and ready to go, and I am delighted to have everybody back once again.

Under the order entered into on December 9, the Senate will resume consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 2673, the Omnibus appropriations measure. A cloture vote will occur today on that conference report at 3 p.m., and that will be the first rollcall vote of this session. The consent agreement allows for equally divided debate until that vote on invoking cloture.

As a reminder, the Senate will be in recess from the hours of 12:30 today to 2:15 for the weekly party conferences to meet.

I also want to remind my colleagues that this evening at 9 p.m. the President will deliver the State of the Union Address and therefore Senators should assemble in the Senate Chamber at 8:35 so that the Senate may proceed at approximately 8:45 this evening to the Hall of the House of Representatives for that address.

I do thank all Members for their attention and I look forward to a productive second session.

CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, we will be having a cloture vote today at 3 o'clock and thus I would like to use my leadership time over the next 10 or 12 minutes, rather than to state the goals and planning for this session, which I

will try to do at some point tomorrow, to address the issue before us and that is to finish up the unfinished work of the first session. The question before us, as I mentioned, is the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004. It is important legislation, and I think how we handle that legislation will in large part set the tone for the remainder of this Congress. I just want to spend a few minutes on that.

First, I thank the distinguished chairman, who is occupying the Chair, and the ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and their staff, for the tremendous work, hard work, dedicated work last year. We asked a great deal of that Appropriations Committee. They produced. They delivered. Today it is my hope we will be able to bring an end to that work with the passage of the seven remaining appropriations bills.

As you look back over the last 12 months, you see the committee completed action on 27 regular appropriations bills, completed action on 3 major supplemental bills, completed action on 4 continuing resolutions, and now finally the 7 remaining regular appropriations bills for 2004.

One thing is certain, that people have had sufficient time to review what is in this Omnibus appropriations bill, to review the legislation. It has been available now for 57 days. It was filed on November 25, 2003.

It is obvious that the legislation is not such that everybody is pleased; some people want more projects; some people want more spending; some people want less spending. There are many provisions in there that I personally would have liked to see turn out differently. But it is a product of months of work last fall and last winter, and it is the nature of all legislation, as we in this body know, that compromises are in order—compromises with the House

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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